

**REMARKS BY
DR. HENSLEY SOBERS
CHAIRMAN, TVET COUNCIL
AT THE CEREMONY TO AWARD
THE NATIONAL VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATION
TUESDAY FEBRUARY 10, 2009
HILTON HOTEL
2:30 P.M.**

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND NVQs

Master of Ceremonies, Mr. Trevor King, Executive Director, TVET Council; Senator the Hon. Arni B. Walters, Minister of State, Ministry of Labour and Immigration; Mr. Carston Simmons, Permanent Secretary, Labour, Ministry of Labour and Immigration; Mrs. Paulette Dunn-Smith, Executive Director (acting), the HEART Trust/National Training Agency (NTA), Jamaica; representatives of NVQ Centres, the Sandy Lane Hotel and the National Initiative for Service Excellence (NISE); NVQ Awardees, other specially invited guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, good afternoon and welcome to the dawn of a new phase and perhaps the most anticipated

phase in the development of Technical and Vocational Education and Training in Barbados.

On behalf of the TVET Council I would like to thank you for your attendance here this afternoon as we pause from our regular schedule to recognise, award and celebrate the work and achievements of several individuals and organisations.

In particular, we honour the Candidates, who through their commitment, dedication and motivation, form the first group of persons to complete the National Vocational Qualification Barbados (NVQB), both the full award and units of an NVQ.

We also honour the second group of Assessors to receive the National Vocational Qualification Jamaica (NVQJ), Level 4 in Assessment, both the full award and selected units.

As Chairman of the TVET Council, I extend special thanks to all of the organisations and individuals that have partnered with the Council in the pursuit of its mandate of facilitating

workforce development: the Industry Lead Bodies, the Assessors, the Internal and External Verifiers and all those persons and organisations that gave freely of their time and expertise to help develop the occupational standards on which all future workforce training, assessment and certification is expected to be based. By extension, I wish to recognise those of you - represented here today - who participated in the pilot of the occupational standards for training and assessment purposes, which has resulted in your workers being recognised for their job competence with tangible proof in the form of an NVQ, or units of an NVQ.

Workforce Development: TVET Council's role

I am confident that the members of the Council and Staff would also like this ceremony to be viewed as a signal that the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Council is on a path of accelerating its thrust to assist in preparing the Barbadian workforce to be world class -

capable of competing with the best in class, regardless of the occupation or business sector.

The TVET Council's contribution to Barbados' development and sustainability is to facilitate the development of occupational standards by which persons are trained and certified.

We believe that certification is an essential part of the right to education, and, we have embraced the competence-based approach to training. Our intention is to have all workforce training based on standards developed by industry. We believe that by encouraging a number of technical and vocational occupations to develop consistent and systematic performance standards vocational education and training will become more relevant, efficient and effective.

However, the TVET Council cannot achieve this mission without the full participation of all relevant stakeholders:

1. To you the Assessors I say: in this competency-based system of training (CBET), Assessors are the guardians of the quality of a competent workforce in Barbados and the region. People are deemed competent based on your judgement. We are relying on you to ensure that those persons who reach national standards, and only those persons, are awarded the NVQB. Your judgements therefore must be fair, reliable and evidence-based.
2. To the candidates: your role is to take responsibility for your learning and development to ensure that it meets your needs, and, to cooperate with your Assessors by providing the evidence of your competence and feedback on the assessment process so that it meets with success. Once certified as competent, you will be the standard-bearers and must be therefore consistent in the quality and professionalism of your job performance.
3. To the training institutions and NVQ centres: you have the task of ensuring that the NVQ candidates develop the knowledge understanding, skills and attitudes to meet the

relevant occupational standards. Where necessary and practicable, you will be required to ensure candidates get the work-based experience needed for assessment bearing in mind your duty of care to all candidates.

4. Finally, to employers I say: because the NVQ is a work-based qualification, your role is a very important one. You are to provide candidates with the necessary opportunities to practice the application of the knowledge and skills that they have acquired, thereby influencing their positive motivation and ensuring them the opportunity for assessment against the standards.

The assessment process is a rigorous one, and documentation is an important aspect of the process towards any quality standards programme/award such as the International Standards Organisation (ISO) and Zagat.

I urge all stakeholders, whether employers, industry experts, training providers, or workers' representatives, to

be mindful that the success of the NVQ system depends on the strength of the occupational standards. In order to serve their purpose, standards must remain valid, relevant and current. I, therefore, put you on notice that you will be called upon by the TVET Council, from time to time, to participate in the process.

Workforce Development: TVET Council's Vision

As part of its strategic plan 2009 -2013, the Council adopted a vision *"To be the premier catalyst for workforce development in Barbados and the region"*.

For us this means adopting a stronger stakeholder-needs orientation, and emphasizing inspirational leadership to ensure that Barbados' education and training system follows a workforce development model that has competence-based training, assessment and NVQ certification, based on occupational standards, at its core.

The NVQ system has several benefits:

- i. For persons like you, who are being awarded today, an NVQ provides assurance of quality and evidence of your ability to apply your academic knowledge to work related expectations and requirements which meet international standards. You have earned life portable occupational qualifications that facilitate freedom of movement; enhance your employability and career advancement; and boost your credibility and marketability as entrepreneurs, small business persons or independent contractors. With its five-level framework that ranges from Level one (i.e. entry level) to Level five (i.e. senior management level) the NVQ system will facilitate your lifelong learning and professional development;
- ii. Employers will benefit from the assurance that they can identify qualified employees and better

plan for staff upgrading and development where skill or performance gaps exist;

- iii. Altogether, workforce preparation and performance will be improved with the addition of the occupational standards to drive curricula change and bring instructional content in line with the results expected in employment.

Through this Technical and Vocational Education and Training approach, the TVET Council is at present working to further expand the list of occupational standards and NVQs which form part of the framework of National Occupational Standards (NOS) and National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) system in Barbados. We have so far introduced NVQs in approximately ten occupational areas including customer service, amenity horticulture, bar service, care of the older adult, food and drink service, food preparation and cookery, housekeeping, occupational safety and health, management and reception. We will shortly be introducing

NVQs in security services and entrepreneurship. And, on our horizon, we envisage that contractors, masons, carpenters, boat-builders, fishnet weavers, health workers, office professionals and journalists will be persuaded to attain National Vocational Qualifications.

As part of the process, we will also be recruiting occupationally competent individuals to undergo training and certification to serve as Assessors.

Through the Employment and Training Fund (ETF), the TVET Council will continue to encourage and support the training and development of workers to local, regional and internationally-benchmarked occupational standards. In that regard, it is worthy to note that for the current financial year which will end on March 31, 2009, the ETF has so far approved over \$1.9 m. in support of training programmes for 3,594 persons from 43 companies and organisations.

During this economic downturn, many organisations either through their own actions or as a result of the actions of others will lose many of the resources they would need to enable them to achieve their goals. It can seem difficult to project a vision for the future when you don't know if your organisation will have the means to survive for the present. However, adversity forces us all to take stock not only of where we are but also what we do and what our priorities need to be. In an environment where many people feel forced to lower their expectations, now is the time to invest rather than cut back on human resources.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I once again offer congratulations to you the awardees on your achievements and urge you to continue along the path of lifelong learning. To the Assessors, Internal and External Verifiers, and NVQ Centre representatives, we appreciate your support and look

forward to strengthening our mutually beneficial relationships over the coming years.

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to this world-wide movement for workforce development and enjoy this afternoon of celebration.

Thank you.